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SMELLIE (William).

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A N

A N S W E R

TO A LATE

P A M P H L E T,

INTITULED, A

L E T T E R

TO

Dr. S M E L L I E;

S H E W I N G

The IMPROPRIETY of his new in-
vented Wooden FORCEPS, &c.

Invidus Alterius macrescit rebus Opimis. HORAT.

L O N D O N:

Printed for C. CORBET, at Addison's-Head, over-
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AN
ANSWER
TO A LATE
PAMPHLET,
INTITLED,
A Letter to Dr. Smellie, &c.

DR. SMELLIE having thought proper, for the Satisfaction of his Students, to communicate in private the following Answer to a Scurrilous Pamphlet, intituled, *A Letter to Dr. SMELLIE, &c.* from one who calls himself *William Douglass, M. D.* I thought it my Duty to publish that worthy Man's modest Vindication of himself; that the World may see, how groundless and malevolent those Aspersions are, which have been thrown upon him, with

all the Bitterness and Presumption that Insolence and Envy could inspire.

This I have a Right to undertake, because, having acquired my own Knowledge in Midwifery, under the Instructions of this Gentleman, whatever is levelled against his Character, and Method of Practice, must affect me, and others who have attended his Lectures, and now profess to follow his Example.----As I live at a Distance from *London*, consequently had not an Opportunity of enquiring personally into the Circumstances of the Facts alledged by Dr. SMELLIE's Adversary : I no sooner heard of the Pamphlet, than I begged an Explanation, in a Letter to the Gentleman accused, who favoured me with a Copy of the Charge, inclosed in the following Answer.

SIR,

ACCORDING to your Desire, I have sent, inclosed, the Pamphlet published against me by Dr. Douglass, who is not (as you imagined) either Son or Relation to the late famous Physician of that Name. You will observe, that he says, he has heard of eight Women who died in a few Months, by the Use of the wooden Forceps.---As you know that I never use any Instrument but when it is absolutely necessary for the Safety of the Mother or Child, you will not be surprized

surprized when I assure you, that I had used that Instrument only twice, before his Letter was published, and that in both Cases it succeeded to my Wish; the Women recovered, without having sustained any Damage; nor could the least Hurt or Impression be discerned on the Heads of the Children.---I was called to the first by Mrs. *Blackwell*, Midwife, in *Old-Bond-street*; and to the second, by your old Acquaintance Mrs. *Brown*, in *George's-Court*, by *Prince's-Street, Soho*, who has seen me deliver another since that Time; and a fourth was extracted in Presence of Mrs. *Fox*, Midwife, at the *Acorn* in *New Court by Bow-Street, Covent-Garden*, with whom the Doctor himself is acquainted.

He likewife exclaims against my Behaviour to the K---g's Coachman's Wife; tho' I think, in the whole Course of my Practice, I never acted with more Circumspection than in that Case, which I all along looked upon as extremely dangerous.

She was a Woman turned of Forty, of a gross Habit, and had never bore a Child.---In the Seventh Month of her Pregnancy she received a Fall, that brought on a pretty large Discharge, which, however, by proper Management, was soon restrained; tho' it commonly returned on the least Motion or Exercise. About the Middle of the Eighth Month

Month I was called, when it had returned in larger Quantity than before ; but it diminished by Degrees, and soon stopt altogether. What seemed to me most necessary at that Juncture, was to keep up her Strength by a nutritive Diet, consisting of the lightest kind of Food : But, being apprehensive of Danger from her great Weakness, I advised the Husband to call in Dr. *Hoadley*, Physician to his Majesty's Household, who approved of what had been done, and ordered the same Regimen to be continued. After this, she went on tolerably well, having now and then some small Returns, tho' not so much as to require the Tryal of any other Method ; for the Delivery could not have been attempted with any Probability of Success, even altho' the Discharge had been in greater Quantity, the Os Internum being close shut, and extremely rigid. Two or three Weeks before her full Time, she was taken with slight Pains ; upon which I was called, and found the Os Internum open about the Breadth of a Sixpence, and within it a soft Substance, that felt like the Placenta, or coagulated Blood. As she had rested but indifferently the preceding Night, was faint and weak, and had some small Returns of the Discharge, I desired a Consultation with another of the Profession, and the Family being Strangers in *England*, mentioned some of the most eminent in my own Way. One

of

of the Women proposed Sir *R—d M—gh—m*, but he being engag'd, Doctor *Sands* was sent for, who, far from reflecting against my Conduct (as is alledged in the Letter) gave it as his Opinion, that it was still proper to support her Strength by Broths and nourishing Food, and more safe to wait until these slight Pains should bring on the right Labour, than to use any Violence in attempting to deliver her immediately. I was again called about Nine o'Clock the same Night, when she was taken all of a sudden with frequent Faintings, in one of which she expired soon after. This sudden Symptom prevented me from making any Attempt; and indeed, had not this Event happened, I should have been afraid of her dying in the Operation, because of her gross and weak Habit of Body. Cases of this kind require the utmost Prudence and Caution. I have saved many Women and Children by immediate Delivery, when the Patients were not very low and weak, or wore out with frequent Losses of Blood; and when the Discharge happened all of a sudden, in a good Constitution; the Parts being open, soft, and used to Extension by a former Birth. But when the Constitution is gross, the Parts rigid, and the Patient weakened by interrupted Floodings, I have always practised the foregoing Method, which has

has often been attended with Success. As soon as every body present was satisfied that this Person was dead, I opened her Abdomen, and having taken out the Child, examined the Uterus, and found the Placenta firmly adhering to its inferior and posterior Part : About two Fingers Breadth of the lower Edge was separated from the Os Internum, which it covered ; and this was what Dr. *Sands* and I had felt in the Morning. Having extracted the Secundines, I tried with my Hand to open the Os Internum from the Inside of the Uterus, which, with great Force, I performed, not without tearing it about two Inches on one Side. By this, it appears how difficult it is to dilate this Part in Women going of their first Child, especially when they are pretty old. Indeed, it is sometimes impossible to be done before they come to their full Time ; and even then, not until the Parts are thin, soft, and largely opened by previous Labour. The Doctor also affirms, that the Child was taken out alive, and lived a few Moments : An Assertion which plainly shews, that he had but an imperfect Account of the Matter ; for the Child was actually dead. Cases of the same Denomination differ so widely from one another, that it is impossible for any Man to judge aright of what happens, unless he is present all the Time.

I am

I am likewise accused of having Hands too large for the Practice of my Profession : But if Dr. *Douglas* had perused *La Motte's* Treatise on Midwifery, he would not (probably) have exclaimed so much against mine, which (by the bye) are none of the largest : That *French* Author ridicules the Objection, and confirms his Argument by bringing in the Example of *Mingot*, who was one of the most famous Accoucheurs in *Caen*, and whose Hands were remarkably big ; and I think it needs no great Art to demonstrate, that a large Hand and strong Arm are often requisite in difficult Births ; and that there is no Case in Midwifery, where they can do any Harm if properly used.

Those who take upon them to censure the Conduct of others, ought to be very free from any Imputation in their own : And though I will by no means imitate the Doctor's Example, in hunting after Complaints, and publishing Misrepresentations to his Prejudice ; I will take the Liberty to mention his Behaviour in two Cases, where I was also concerned.

About a Year ago, I was called to one Mrs. *Price* at a Patten-maker's in *Bow-Street*, facing the upper End of *Drury-Lane* : I found her in Labour of her first Child, and upon Examination, assured her that she was in no immediate Danger ; that altho' the

Case might be tedious, she would be soon delivered when the Pains should increase and turn stronger.---This Encouragement revived her drooping Spirits, and had the desired Effect: Upon which, I was told that a Gentleman who lodged at the Sign of the *Angel*, in one of the Streets near *Covent-Garden*, had been with her before I came; that he had been very angry with the Midwife for not calling him sooner; and affirmed, that if the Woman was not immediately delivered, she would be infallibly lost; pronouncing that the Child was already dead, with such Expressions and Behaviour as frightened away the Woman's Pains, and disgusted every Body present so much, that he was not allowed to deliver her, but received his Fee and went Home.---I told them, that the best Practitioner might be mistaken; but as her Pains had returned, I had good Hopes, and assured them, that there were no certain Signs of the Child's being dead. Having thus given my Opinion, about Five o'Clock in the Morning I went away and desired the Midwife to send for me on the least Appearance of Danger: I was accordingly called about two Hours after, and came just in Time to assist the Midwife in the Birth; the Woman was safely delivered of a living Child, and both did very well; as can be attested by

Mrs.

Mrs. *Charles* the Midwife, an Acquaintance of Mr. *Philipson*'s Surgeon, near the *London Workhouse, Bishoptsgate*.

I shall leave it to the Determination of the Practitioners in this Way, whether the Doctor or I acted the wisest Part ; and what his Method of Delivery would have been, on the Supposition of the Child's being dead. Let them decide also, how far I am blameable, in contriving a Method of delivering in laborious and dangerous Cases, by which neither Mother nor Child is hurt ; as must of Necessity happen in the Use of the Crotchet, Fillet and Whalebone, which last Expedient is the Doctor's boasted Secret ; tho' commonly known and rejected for the Inconvenience with which it is attended.

The next Case which happened only a few Days before his Letter was published, was that of a Woman, who while she was big with Child, fell into a Lethargy. Without pretending to describe the Particulars of her Situation, because I was called but a little while before she was delivered ; I think I have a Right to ask him the following Questions :

When he despaired of his Patient's Life, and told me there was no Room to attempt her Delivery ; but that he had a Knife in his Pocket, with which he proposed to open her immediately after Death, that the Child

if possible, might be saved ; did not I upon Examination, tell him in Presence of Mr. *Bromfield*, Apothecary, that the Woman might be easily delivered ; that altho' she seemed really expiring, it was the only Chance for saving her, and that the Child if alive, could receive no Harm in the Operation ?

When Doctor *Wilmot* was called for his Advice, touching the lethargick Complaint, did he not declare himself of the same Opinion ? If the Patient had been delivered sooner, might not the Child have been brought into the World alive ?

When he was at a Loss what to prescribe after Delivery, and thought of nothing but letting her expire without any farther Assistance ; did not I advise a little warm Wine which was accordingly swallowed ; warm Bricks to be applied to her Feet and Hands, a Blister, and a cordial Mixture ?

As I understand that the Doctor intends to found another publick Address to me, on the Subject of a Case in which I was concerned, some Weeks before his first Letter appeared ; I shall take this Opportunity of anticipating his Design, by a fair Representation of the whole Affair, and I believe every candid Practitioner will easily perceive and approve my Reasons for treating the Patient in a different Method from that which

which I used, to the King's Coachman's Wife: A Piece of Conduct which my Adversary (it seems) imputes to my Want of Judgment, and a vague unsettled Notion of Practice.

A Woman in *Devereux-Court*, of a very weak Habit of Body, having been under great Affliction for the Loss of her Husband, was suddenly taken with a violent Hæmorrhage; upon which, Dr. *Sands*, who had been bespoke to lay her, was sent for about Four in the Morning, but he being otherways engaged, I was called at Seven, and desired to make all possible Haste, or else the Woman would be lost. When I went to the Patient I found a Midwife of Dr. *Douglas*'s Acquaintance present, who told me, that the Woman had some slight Pains, and had lost very little Blood; in which she was contradicted by every Body in the Room as well as the Patient herself, who said she had lost Gallons. Finding her Pulse very low and feeble, and her Countenance pale, I foretold the Danger, and desired them to send again for Dr. *Sands*: But this was objected to, because it would take up too much Time, and I was intreated to do all I could, to save the Woman's Life.

As the Os Internum was thin and largely opened, and the Membranes with Part of the Placenta presented; I at first designed to try by

by breaking the Membranes, if the Discharge would abate upon Contraction of the Uterus. In making this Effort, my Hand slipt easily into the Vagina and Uterus, and the Membranes being broke, I turned the Child which was very small, and delivered it immediately, the Secundines following of themselves. This being performed with more Ease and Safety than could be expected, I ordered an Assistant to press the Abdomen with her Hands, that no bad Consequence might ensue from its being suddenly emptied. The Child was alive, the Hæmorrhage stopt, and the Woman seemed to be in a good Way ; but having lost more Blood than her Constitution could bear, in a little Time her Pulse became low and creeping, and the Extremities grew cold. Upon this, I advised them to give her a little Chicken Broth frequently, to fill the empty Vessels, and keep up the Circulation of the Fluids ; and ordered warm Bricks covered with Flannel, to be applied to her Hands and Feet. The Midwife being obliged immediately after Delivery, to go to another Woman, I waited until she returned, and then left the Patient to her Care ; having advised them to give the Broth frequently, tho' in small Quantities, that her feeble Stomach might not be overcharged ; and assuring them that she was in the utmost Danger ; tho' if she could be

be kept alive five or six Hours, she might still recover. But she expired soon after I went away. I hope it will appear from the Particulars I have related, that there was a wide Difference between the Case of this Woman and that of the Coachman's Wife: In one, there was a gross Habit exhausted by small interrupted Discharges, the Os Internum close shut, and the Parts extremely rigid. In the other, the Os Internum was thin, wide open, the Parts soft and extensible, and the Discharge so sudden and profuse, that there was no Room for Hesitation.

I am likewise taxed with Obstinacy by the Doctor, who alledges, that he gave me Advice in private, with regard to the Use of Instruments in Midwifery: But I don't remember to have ever spoke with him on the Subject: And indeed I never much courted his Conversation.

What I have said, will (I hope) partly convince you that I have been but indifferently treated: However, as Innocence in Time will get the better of groundless Aspersion, I choose to be silent on the Subject, at least postpone any public Dispute to another Opportunity.

I have inclosed the Copy of a Letter which I wrote some time ago to Mr. *Monro* Professor of Anatomy at *Edinburgh*, in which I give a short Account of the wooden For-
ceps,

ceps, and relate two more Cases of Midwifery, in which they were used. Pray let me hear of your Success; and if you have made any remarkable Observations in our Way, communicate them, that they may be added to my Collection.

I am, SIR,

Yours, &c.

Altho' every impartial Reader will allow, that the most material Articles of the Charge exhibited against Dr. *Smellie*, are incontestably refuted by the above candid Representation; I am prompted by my Zeal for Truth, and Esteem for a Man whom it is my Duty as well as Interest to defend, to give that Part of the Publick which may be unacquainted with the Doctor, a right Idea of a Character which has been so maliciously mangled and defaced.

Dr. *Smellie* after having practised 19 Years in *Scotland* with universal Applause, quitted that Country (where he had acquired the Esteem of every Body who knew him) for the Sake of his Health, which was greatly impaired by the vast Fatigue he underwent, and settled in *London* about eight Years ago.

As he was every where beloved for his benevolent and inoffensive Disposition, he was likewise regarded for his Judgment and Under-

Understanding; particularly, for an uncommon Genius in all Sorts of Mechanicks, which after having shewed itself in many other Improvements, he manifested in the Machines which he has contrived for teaching the Art of Midwifery. Machines which Dr. *Desaguliers*, who frequently visited him, allowed to be infinitely preferable to all that he had ever seen of the same Kind; and which I (from having seen those that are used at *Paris*) will aver to be by far, the best that ever were invented. They are composed of real Bones mounted and covered with artificial Ligaments, Muscles and Cuticle, to give them the true Motion, Shape, and Beauty of natural Bodies, and the Contents of the Abdomen, are imitated with great Exactness. Besides his large Machines, (which are three in Number) he has finished six artificial Children with the same minute Proportion in all their Parts; so, that with this Apparatus, he can perform and demonstrate all the different Kinds of Delivery, with more Deliberation, Perspicuity, and Fulness, than can be expected on real Subjects.

He has been employed for some Years past, in collecting every Thing that was curious and useful in Midwifery, from the ancient and modern Writers, in order to contribute as much as in him lies, to the

Perfection of that Art: For which Purpose also, Part of his leisure Hours is engrossed in laying up Materials for finishing more artificial Women and Children; well knowing, that it is as an hundred to one, if any of those who may succeed him in teaching, shall have the same Mechanical Turn. He has reduced the Instruments formerly used in his Profession, to a small Number; and these he has improved, by rendering them more simple and commodious. His Method of teaching is distinct, mechanical and unreserved, and his whole Deportment so candid, primitive and humane, that he is respected by his Acquaintance, revered by his Students, and beloved in the highest Degree by all those who experience his Capacity and Care.

No Man is more ready than he, to crave Advice and Assistance, when the least Danger or Difficulty occurs; and no Man more communicative, without the least Self-sufficiency or Ostentation. He never officiously intermeddled in the Concerns of other People, or strove to insinuate himself into Practice by depreciating the Character of his Neighbour; but made his Way into Business by the Dint of Merit alone, and maintains his Reputation by the most beneficent and disinterested Behaviour.

What Punishment then does the Man deserve, who in contempt of Charity, Decency and Truth, assaults such an amiable Character with all the Virulence and Falshood that Envy could hatch and Malice propagate? What but the Recompence of the worst of Russians! And yet, forsooth, he cloaths his Malevolence with the Pretext of publick Spirit. Suppose we were inclined to retort this specious Argument upon himself; and inquire into the Character of this bold Censor, who presumes to reform and instruct Mankind; I know the Particulars would turn out so little to the Honour either of his Heart or Head, that I forbear the Scrutiny out of meer Compassion; and only advise him to fall upon some more laudable Method of *publishing his own Existence*, and raising himself from Obscurity, than that of scandalizing his Betters: A Task which tho' he had Spite enough to contrive, he yet wanted Understanding to perform; and therefore had Recourse to an Auxiliary who seems indeed worthy of the Cause he has espoused.

I believe it will not be disagreeable to the Reader, if I here subjoin the Substance of two Letters from Dr. Smellie to two eminent Gentlemen of the Profession in *Scotland*, explaining the Nature, Use and Success of the wooden Extractors, for which he is so unjustly condemned.

A

L E T T E R
TOMr. Monro, Professor of Anatomy
in the University of Edinburgh,
dated September, 1747.

SIR,

Several Months ago I received your obliging Letter by a *West-India* Gentleman, who attended my Lectures on Midwifery, according to your Advice. Mr. *Irving*, who was formerly your Pupil, having set out from this Place on *Friday* last for *Edinburgh*, in his Way to his Regiment in *Ireland*, I desired him to wait on you, and to shew you a new kind of wooden Extractors, that I have just now contrived. I had only then tryed to deliver with them on the Machines; but since that I have had the Opportunity of using them in a laborious Case. The Woman had been in Travel for two Days of her first Child. The Membranes

branes were broke several Hours before I was called, which was about Nine o'Clock on *Sunday* Night. When I examined, the Head of the Child presented at the upper Part of the Pelvis; the Mouth of the Womb was open; but retarded the Head from coming down at the Os Pubis: As the Woman had no bad Symptom, and her Pains were strong, I only dilated the Os Uteri with my Finger; and, by Degrees, got it flipt up betwixt the hind Head and the Os Pubis; after this, I left her to the Care of the Midwife, expecting the Pains would gradually force along the Head, and that she would soon be delivered. I was again called next Morning about Five, when her Pains were strong and frequent. The Head was pushed down to the Middle of the Pelvis; but had not advanced any further for two or three Hours. The Bones of the Head rode over one another at the Sutures, the wrinkled Scalp was swelled, and formed a large Tumour; the Woman was much fatigued, and as there might be Danger, both of an Inflammation of the contained Parts in the upper Part of the Pelvis, and of the Child also, from the great Pressure of the Brain; I introduced the Extractors, and immediately deliver'd the Foetus. There was not the least Mark or Hurt on the Head, neither were the Parts of the Woman any way tore

tore, altho' I was oblig'd to use a good deal of Force in extracting. The Midwife and Assistants did not know but that I delivered her with the Help of the Fillet, which I used in securing the Ends of the Extractors. The above Gentleman will inform you of the other Improvements that I have lately made, on the the Crotchets, Scissars, and the steel Forceps; all which I have found, by repeated Trials, answer better than those formerly used. I have always studied to contrive the Instruments of Midwifery in the simplest Manner, and to reduce them to as small a Number as possible, and never to use any, where the Delivery could be safely performed, either by the Woman's Pains, or by the Acoucheur's Hands. I promised to write to Mr. *Irving*, the first Time I had an Opportunity of delivering with this new Instrument; but, as I knew not his Address till he wrote to me, I have sent you the Trouble of this long Letter; that when you see him, he may have the Satisfaction of knowing, that I have succeeded in my first Trial; and, at the same Time, I hope it will not be unacceptable to yourself.

Part of a

L E T T E R

T O

*Mr. JOHN GORDON, Surgeon, at
Glasgow, dated January the 12th,
1747-8.*

GR EAT Complaints have been made by most Practitioners in Midwifery, that when the Head of the Child presents, and can neither be delivered by the Woman's Efforts, nor returned and brought by the Feet, they were obliged, for the Safety of the Woman, to destroy the Child, and extract it with the Crotchet.

Many have been the Contrivances to redress this Grievance ; such as different kinds of Forceps, and Fillets ; the first of which have been brought to greater Perfection here, and used with greater Success, than any where else ; and indeed, seems to be a much better Expedient than the other.

In

In all preter-natural Cases, it is no difficult matter to determine the Method of Delivery ; but, in the above Case, when the Child can neither be delivered in the natural Way, nor returned and brought by the Feet ; when the Woman is weakened, sunk, and wore out by long Labour, if, instead of extracting with the Crotchet, we can perform with the Forceps, without hurting either Mother or Child, provided the Pelvis is not too narrow, nor the Head monstrous, nobody will hesitate in giving this Instrument the Preference to all others ; for if we could save one in three Children, we should be to blame in neglecting the Means.

About three Years ago, I contrived a more simple Method of fixing the Steel Forceps, by locking them into one another ; by which Means, they have all the Advantages of the former Kinds, without their Inconveniences ; and, as I have had frequent Occasion to use them, I can assure you, that I save three in four of those on whom they are practised ; and frequently avoid the Danger of too long a Delay.

I have laid it down as a Maxim to myself, and the Gentlemen who attend my Course, never to use any Instrument, or Violence ; but when it is absolutely necessary for the Safety of the Mother and Child : And, as it

it is seldom possible to take hold of the Head with both Hands, the Forceps are proposed as artificial ones, to supply that Defect: But, that this may be done with Judgment, to the best Advantage; the following Rules are to be observed.

If the Head is low in the Pelvis, the Hand must be raised as high as possible, that the Fingers may reach to the Ears of the Child, and exactly distinguish how the Head presents.

The Woman being layed in a right Position, the Fingers must pass the Os Internum, and direct the Ends of the Forceps. Each Blade is to be passed along the Side of the Head, and kept in an imaginary Line, with the middle Space between the Umbilicus and Scorbiculum Cordis of the Woman.

When the Forceps are thus introduced, and locked into one another, the Head is to be pulled gently along; the Forehead (if it does not present fair) turned into the Hollow of the Os Sacrum, and Hind-head to the lower Part of the Os Pubis; the last being brought down, the Forceps are to be raised over the Os Pubis, to bring out the Head with a half-round Turn, that the Perinæum may not be fore.

In this Manner, the Child is delivered frequently, without any Hurt, or even Mark on its Head.

It is necessary to remember, that the Diameter, from Ear to Ear, is less than that from the Hind to the Forehead. The different Width of the Brim and lower Part of the Pelvis, must also be considered, as well as the Depth at different Parts, with the Shape and Form of the Inside. By the Knowledge of these Things, we can form a right Judgment, when to push up, pull down, or turn the Head in the Cavity.

By this Time, I believe you are sufficiently tired with what, perhaps, you may think I am too fond of.

The Design of the Wooden Contrivance, is to make them appear less terrible to the Women; besides, they are portable, and make no clinking Noise when used. I have, as yet, only delivered three Times with them, but cannot recommend them before the Steel ones, till further Trial. From the Shortness of the Handles, they have not so great a Purchase; but then there is a better Hold to introduce them, and the Want of Purchase is sufficiently supplied by several Turns of a Fillet, or Garter,

Garter, drawn very tight round the Handles at the Notches, which likewise keeps the Blades firm upon the Head of the Child; and leaves the Hands at more Liberty to rest, and help the Head gradually along, at each Effort of the Woman's Pains.

F. I. N. I. S.

